You can easily make effective fire starters at home using common household items, most often combining a readily ignitable material (tinder) with a fuel source (like wax or petroleum jelly) to prolong the burn time.

Method 1: Dryer Lint and Wax "Fire Cups" (Recommended)

This method is highly effective, inexpensive, and easy to make in bulk. The wax makes them burn for several minutes and helps them resist moisture.

Materials:

- Cardboard egg carton
- Dryer lint
- Old candle wax or paraffin wax
- A double boiler (or a jar inside a pot of water) to melt the wax safely

Instructions:

1. **Prepare the wax:** Place your wax in a jar, and then place that jar inside a larger pot filled with a few inches of water. Heat the water on the stove over medium-low heat until the wax melts completely. **Caution:** Never melt wax directly over a heat source as it is flammable.
2. **Fill the carton:** Loosely stuff each cup of the cardboard egg carton with dryer lint.
3. **Pour the wax:** Once the wax is melted, carefully remove the jar (using oven mitts) and pour the hot wax over the dryer lint in each cup, ensuring the lint is well-saturated.
4. **Cool and store:** Let the fire starters cool and harden completely, which may take a few hours or overnight. Once solid, cut each cup into individual fire starters. Store them in a waterproof container or a zip-top bag to keep them dry.

Method 2: Petroleum Jelly Cotton Balls

This is a simple, lightweight, and compact method popular with backpackers.

Materials:

- Cotton balls or cotton pads
- Petroleum jelly (Vaseline)
- Ziploc bag or small waterproof container for storage

Instructions:

1. **Coat the cotton:** Scoop up a generous amount of petroleum jelly with a cotton ball.
2. **Rub in the jelly:** Use your fingers to thoroughly work the jelly into the cotton ball until it is completely coated and saturated. It should feel "slimy".
3. **Store:** Place the finished cotton balls in a small, sealed bag or container. When ready to use, fluff up a small bit of the cotton to help it catch a spark or flame.

Other Easy Ideas

- **Sawdust Muffins:** Fill paper muffin cups with wood shavings or sawdust, then pour melted wax over them and let them harden.
- **Waxed Jute Cordage:** Cut natural jute or cotton cord into short lengths and soak them in melted wax, then let them dry on wax paper. The cord acts as a long-burning wick.
- **Pinecones:** Dip pinecones into melted wax to create decorative and effective fire starters.